

2. PRODUCTION OF FEEDSTOCK FOR FOOD AND ENERGY ON THE SAME LAND, THROUGH MULTIPLE-CROPPING PATTERNS AND AGROFORESTRY SYSTEMS

CORRESPONDING MODULE 2

Introduction

Permaculture in France: food self-sufficiency and very small-scale vegetable farms

In France, the strong media coverage of the Bec-Hellouin farm (Eure) and the success of the film *Demain* by Cyril Dion and Mélanie Laurent, released in 2015, have widened the audience, which had previously been relatively confidential, for permaculture. The known achievements correspond essentially to ecological gardening projects, with an educational vocation, or market gardening on very small surfaces. The information available on non-professional situations shows that these are mainly projects for domestic food production, combining vegetable crops with tree cultivation or food forests.

Educational projects are intended to be demonstrators of ecological gardening techniques and the design of nurturing domestic spaces. Professional agricultural projects that openly claim to be permaculture are rare or poorly referenced. They are almost exclusively farms with very small areas (1,000 to 4,500 m² per worker), characterised by a very large number of vegetable crops (35 or more), often in association or in close juxtaposition, and a variety of perennial crops. The work is essentially, if not exclusively, manual. Marketing is systematically done in short circuits, within well-established local networks. This profile corresponds to the situation of many very small organic vegetable farms, which are often distinguished by a mechanisation limited to the very sparing use of a power tiller, a smaller number of crops and a lesser share of woody plants, and slightly larger areas per worker (on average, 5,000 m²).

The economic analyses show that these small farms can achieve quite respectable results. The probability of generating a minimum income for a decent workload is high for routine farms (around 90%), and much higher than that observed for more mechanised farms working larger areas with much higher investments and expenses, which correspond to the recommendations of agricultural development services. These last points are essential for the success of the installation projects that are multiplying today: land remains difficult to access and the investment capacities of the applicants are often limited. The fact remains that setting up a permaculture market garden remains a serious challenge. Many projects fail because they have not measured the demands of market gardening, because they have not organised a reliable marketing channel, because they lack the practical skills to design and run the desired system: training and learning in the field, from farm to farm, remain the key to success.

Source: <https://www.jardinsdefrance.org/> article "Permaculture: between life project and political project".

Description

Le Clos FREMUR

Since 2015 Sébastien BRAZILLE has been practising permaculture in Maine et Loire.

At the confluence of the Loire and Maine rivers, the Clos Frémur farm has 4 hectares of market garden land with fertile, deep and irrigable soil. Divided into 4 blocks, all the plots are located within a radius of 1 km from the farm, in Sainte-Gemmes-sur-Loire and Angers.

I spent 2015 preparing my arrival on the farm: preparing the land, dismantling and reassembling greenhouses to produce seasonal vegetables all year round (2000 m²), looking for equipment... and now the first seedlings have been planted!

The farm offers a variety of organic vegetables in season: tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, cabbage, potatoes, onions, peppers.

The year the farm was launched, Mr BRAZILLE obtained his organic label and the AB certificate.



These include :

- Bringing several species together;
- Use natural fertilizers;
- Making recovery a habit;
- Let nature do its work.



Le Clos
Frémur



Advantages and challenges

Mr BRAZILLE said that a farmer must have two skills to run a farm using the "permaculture" model.

I. have a sound knowledge of agriculture

My agricultural career began with Germinance, an organic vegetable seed company. This experience allowed me to touch a wide range of activities: cleaning, packaging and sale of seeds, organisation and monitoring of production! 6 years of discoveries, meetings with farmers, travels in Europe... which made me want to become a farmer. I wanted to experience sowing, raising plants, discovering the diversity of plants... Generously welcomed on a farm in Villevêque, I was able to experiment for two years (2013-2014) on 1.5 ha of land that was lent to me. With a great agronomic, economic and social success, I looked for land to continue my activity.

II. To organise your farm well

Passionate about diversity, I produce a wide range of varieties. I wish to work on the taste of vegetables and will also produce vegetable seeds. Here are the practices I use or aim to use:

- Permaculture: permanent bed, green manure, light tillage, hedgerow
- Farmers' seeds: reproducible population varieties, chosen for their taste qualities, seedling production
- Ecological and sustainable: little or no disposable plastic mulching, drip/micro-sprinkling, no synthetic chemical treatment, use of plant purins, use of Bouchemaine cattle manure
- Agroforestry: fruit trees in the middle of crops
- Biodynamics: respecting the lunar calendar

Main data

Created in 2015
Organic and AB certified
Production of seasonal vegetables

Further Information

<https://leclosfremur.fr>